

University of Groningen

Compensatory and additive helper effects in the cooperatively breeding Seychelles warbler (*Acrocephalus sechellensis*)

van Boheemen, Lotte A.; Hammers, Martijn; Kingma, Sjouke A.; Richardson, David S.; Burke, Terry; Komdeur, Jan; Dugdale, Hannah L.

Published in:
Ecology and Evolution

DOI:
[10.1002/ece3.4982](https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.4982)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2019

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Boheemen, L. A., Hammers, M., Kingma, S. A., Richardson, D. S., Burke, T., Komdeur, J., & Dugdale, H. L. (2019). Compensatory and additive helper effects in the cooperatively breeding Seychelles warbler (*Acrocephalus sechellensis*). *Ecology and Evolution*, 9(5), 2986-2995. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.4982>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Compensatory and additive helper effects in the cooperatively breeding Seychelles warbler (*Acrocephalus sechellensis*)

Lotte A. van Boheemen^{1,2}  | Martijn Hammers²  | Sjouke A. Kingma^{2,3}  |
David S. Richardson^{4,5} | Terry Burke⁶ | Jan Komdeur² | Hannah L. Dugdale^{6,7} 

¹School of Biological Sciences, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia

²Behavioural and Physiological Ecology, Groningen Institute for Evolutionary Life Sciences, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands

³Behavioural Ecology Group, Department of Animal Science, Wageningen University & Research, Wageningen, The Netherlands

⁴School of Biological Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

⁵Nature Seychelles, Mahé, Republic of Seychelles

⁶Department of Animal and Plant Sciences, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

⁷Faculty of Biological Sciences, School of Biology, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

Correspondence

Lotte A. van Boheemen, School of Biological Sciences, Monash University, Clayton, Vic., Australia.
Email: la.vanboheemen@gmail.com

Funding information

Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, Grant/Award Number: 854.11.003, 823.01.014 and Veni; Natural Environment Research Council, Grant/Award Number: NE/F02083X/, NE/I021748/1, NE/K005502/1 and NER/I/S/2002/00712; Rijksuniversiteit Groningen; H2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, Grant/Award Number: HPMF-CT-2000-01074

Abstract

In cooperatively breeding species, care provided by helpers may affect the dominant breeders' investment trade-offs between current and future reproduction. By negatively compensating for such additional care, breeders can reduce costs of reproduction and improve their own chances of survival. Alternatively, helper care can be additive to that of dominants, increasing the fledging fitness of the current brood. However, the influence helpers have on brood care may be affected by group size and territory quality. Therefore, the impact of helping needs to be disentangled from other factors determining offspring investment before conclusive inferences about the effect of help on additive and compensatory care can be made. We used 20 years of provisioning data to investigate the effect of helping on provisioning rates in the facultative cooperatively breeding Seychelles warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis*. Our extensive dataset allowed us to statistically disentangle the effects of helper presence, living in larger groups and different food availability. We show compensatory and additive care (i.e., partial compensation) in response to helper provisioning. Helpers lightened the provisioning load of the dominant male and female and increased total provisioning to nestlings. This was irrespective of group size or territory quality (food availability). Moreover, our results illustrate sex-specific variation in parental care over the course of the breeding event. We discriminate between temporal variation, group size, and territory quality processes affecting cooperative care and as such, gain further insight into the importance of these factors to the evolutionary maintenance of helping behavior.

KEYWORDS

additive care, compensatory care, cooperative breeding, investment strategies, load-lightening, parental care, Seychelles warbler

1 | INTRODUCTION

In cooperative breeding systems, offspring care is often shared between the dominant male and female "breeders," and a variable

number of subordinate helpers (Koenig & Dickinson, 2016; Komdeur et al., 2017; Solomon & French, 1997; Stacey & Koenig, 1990). The optimal amount of parental investment provided by a dominant breeder is determined by the trade-off between current and future

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2019 The Authors. *Ecology and Evolution* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

reproduction (Stearns, 1989, 1992; Williams, 1966) and the care provided by helpers may affect the balance of this trade-off for the dominants (Johnstone, 2011; Russell, Young, Spong, Jordan, & Clutton-Brock, 2007). For example, care provided by helpers may increase the success of the current reproductive attempt, allow the dominants to reproduce more frequently, and/or improve the survival and future reproductive output of the dominants (Brown, Dow, Brown, & Brown, 1978; Heinsohn, 2004; Kingma, Hall, Arriero, & Peters, 2010; Koenig & Dickinson, 2016).

The investment strategies implemented by cooperative breeders are generally classified as “additive” and “compensatory” care strategies (Hatchwell, 1999b; Johnstone, 2011). When helpers improve overall care levels, the care provided is additive (Emlen & Wrege, 1991; Tanaka, Frommen, Engqvist, & Kohda, 2017; Zöttl, Fischer, & Taborsky, 2013). The resulting increase in the total amount of care received by the offspring can lead to higher reproductive success (Bales, French, & Dietz, 2002; Emlen & Wrege, 1991; Hatchwell, 2004; Komdeur, 1994; Russell et al., 2007; Tanaka, Kohda, & Frommen, 2018) through accelerated offspring growth (Bell et al., 2014; Dickinson, Koenig, & Pitelka, 1996; Hodge, 2005) and reduced offspring starvation (Dickinson et al., 1996; Hatchwell, 1999b, 1999a, 2004; Heinsohn, 1995; Kingma et al., 2010). Conversely, when the dominants compensate for the care provided by helpers by reducing their amount of care, the total amount of care received by the offspring may remain similar. Such “load lightening” by helpers can reduce the costs of reproduction for the dominants (Bruitjies, Heg-Bachar, & Heg, 2013; Dixit, English, & Lukas, 2017; Heinsohn, 2004; Koenig & Walters, 2011; Meade, Nam, Beckerman, & Hatchwell, 2010; Scantlebury, Russell, McIlrath, Speakman, & Clutton-Brock, 2002; Sharp, English, & Clutton-Brock, 2013), which can lead to increased dominant survival (Cockburn et al., 2008; Hatchwell & Russell, 1996b; Heinsohn, 1992; Khan & Walters, 2002; Kingma et al., 2010) and increased future reproductive success (Brown & Brown, 1981; Russell, Brotherton, McIlrath, Sharpe, & Clutton-Brock, 2003; Woxvold & Magrath, 2005; Blackmore & Heinsohn, 2007; but see Meade et al., 2010).

These additive and compensatory investment strategies are not mutually exclusive (Hatchwell, 1999b; Kingma et al., 2010) and theory predicts the optimal stable solution is for parents to incompletely compensate for additive care (load lightening) provided by additional carers (partial compensation), resulting in an increase in care received by offspring (Lessells & McNamara, 2012). The degree of parental response may be driven by the likelihood of offspring starvation, with more additive care when the risk of offspring starvation is higher, and more compensatory care when the risk of starvation is lower (Hatchwell, 1999b; Johnstone, 2011; Savage, Russell, & Johnstone, 2012).

Load-lightening and additive care strategies have been studied in many cooperative breeding systems (Hatchwell, 1999a; Hatchwell & Russell, 1996a; Heinsohn, 2004; Liebl, Nomano, Browning, & Russell, 2016; MacGregor & Cockburn, 2002; McDonald, Kazem, & Wright, 2009; Russell, Langmore, Gardner, & Kilner, 2008; Wright & Dingemanse, 1999), but it is often extremely difficult to disentangle

the effect of helpers from the effects of living in a larger group or on different quality territories (Cockburn et al., 2008; Dickinson & Hatchwell, 2004; Kingma, Santema, Taborsky, & Komdeur, 2014). For example, larger groups with more helpers may be better able to occupy territories with higher food availability; hence, the level of care to offspring might increase as a consequence of higher food availability in territories with helpers and not because of the contribution of helpers per se. Similarly, if more individuals occupy the territory and utilize the food sources, apparent load lightening of breeders could instead be the consequence of their reduced provisioning when food is more difficult to find; in such cases breeders would not actually reduce the amount of energy they expend in providing care. However, studies on load-lightening and additive care disentangling the impact of helping from that of living in a larger group or in a territory with higher food availability are rare (e.g., Liebl et al., 2016; Cockburn et al., 2008).

Here, we use 20 years of parental and group provisioning data to investigate how helpers affect both breeder and overall offspring provisioning rates in the facultative cooperatively breeding Seychelles warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis*. Seychelles warblers live in groups that occupy stable territories that are defended year-round (Komdeur, 1991). Groups consist of a pair-bonded dominant male and female and 0–5 subordinate individuals of either sex that may or may not provide help with provisioning nestlings and fledglings (Kingma, Bebbington, Hammers, Richardson, & Komdeur, 2016; Komdeur, 1994). The presence of subordinate helpers and nonhelping subordinates provides the opportunity to disentangle the impact of helping and group size (Woxvold & Magrath, 2005). Subordinates are generally retained offspring from previous reproductive attempts in the territory (but see Richardson, Burke, & Komdeur, 2007; Groenewoud et al., 2018). Dominant individuals gain from helper care as this positively influences the first-year survival of offspring (Komdeur, 1994), an effect that persists into the adulthood of offspring receiving additional care (Brouwer, Richardson, & Komdeur, 2012). A previous study on a dataset collected during the first few years of the Seychelles warbler study found that (a) nests with helpers received a higher amount of total provisioning compared to nests without helpers; (b) the provisioning effort of dominant females was independent of helper presence; and, (c) dominant males reduced their provisioning rates in groups with more helpers (Komdeur, 1994). Here, we replicate this study using a much larger dataset, and, for the first time in this species, disentangle the impact of help from the effects of group size (including helpers and nonhelpers) and food availability.

2 | METHODS

2.1 | Study population

The Seychelles warbler population on Cousin Island (29 ha; 04°20'S, 55°40'E) has been monitored closely since the mid-1980s (Komdeur, Burke, Dugdale, & Richardson, 2016). The main breeding season is July–September, and a smaller breeding season occurs

January–March (Komdeur, 1996). From 1997 onwards, ca. 96% of the population has been color-ringed, using a unique combination of a metal British Trust for Ornithology ring and color rings (Richardson, Jury, Blaakmeer, Komdeur, & Burke, 2001). We recorded the identity of all color-ringed birds present in each territory, and the sex of all birds has been molecularly determined since 1993 using blood samples (Griffiths, Double, Orr, & Dawson, 1998). Dominant birds, defined as the pair-bonded male and female in a territory based on their behavioral interactions and nesting behavior (Richardson, Burke, & Komdeur, 2002), form long-term pair bonds. Groups may contain 0–5 sexually mature (>5 months old) subordinates, which are usually retained offspring (Groenewoud et al., 2018; Kingma et al., 2016; Richardson et al., 2002) and typically produce one clutch per season of a single egg (87%; range 1–3 eggs). Nestlings fledge 18–20 days after hatching and become independent around 88 days of age (Komdeur, 1991). Subordinate birds were defined as “helpers” when they were observed brooding or provisioning offspring at least once during a nest watch, with assessments made at every nest watch. Territories were checked for breeding activity at least once every 2 weeks by following the dominant female for a minimum of 15 min. Once breeding, focal territories were checked every week for at least 15 min to determine nest building, brooding or feeding activity.

2.2 | Provisioning observations

We measured nestling and fledgling provisioning rates at nests produced between 1996 and 2015. Provisioning watches with >10% of provisioning events by unidentified birds were excluded from the analyses ($N = 178$ of 701 watches), with further nest watches excluded with no monthly insect abundance estimate ($N = 74$). A total of 449 nest watches were included in our analyses, measuring 60–90 min each. These watches included a total of 889 dominant breeder provisioning watches (Supporting Information, Table S1) over 353 nests, attempted by 349 unique male–female pairs. The total number of unique birds included 214 dominant females and 209 dominant males. For three and six out of 449 nest watches, no dominant female or male respectively was observed provisioning, resulting in a total of 889 dominant breeder provisioning watches (Supporting Information Table S1). Each nest was watched for a mean of 1.3 times (95% CI = 1.2–1.3), with a mean total observation duration per nest of 82 min (95% CI = 79–86; range = 60–185 min). Of these 449 nest watches, 45% included helpers and 36% included subordinate nonhelpers (Supporting Information Table S2). Ninety nests were watched more than once, and 12 (13%) of these had a subordinate that was classified as a helper in one watch and a nonhelper in another watch. We scored helping on a per nest watch basis, as we were interested in how the behavior of the dominants varied in relation to the number of subordinates that were currently helping with provisioning or brooding.

Provisioning rates were calculated as the number of nest visits during which the nestling(s) was fed. Sex-specific parental investment, including building and guarding the nest or brooding, is known

to change over the course of the pre- and posthatching stages (Komdeur & Kats, 1999). To account for different types of observations as a proxy of chick developmental state, we grouped provisioning watches into three categories: (a) provisioning and brooding: a nestling was fed in the nest and a female was still brooding; (b) provisioning nestling: a nestling was fed in the nest and no brooding occurred; and, (c) provisioning fledgling: a fledgling was fed away from the nest. Although brooding during provisioning can occur as a way to protect the nestling from the environment, most brooding occurred immediately after hatching (field observations).

2.3 | Monthly insect abundance and territory quality

Seychelles warblers are insectivorous, taking 98% of their insect food from the undersides of leaves (Komdeur, 2006; Komdeur & Pels, 2005). The number of insects present in a territory is a useful index of territory quality (Komdeur, 1994) which reflects the number of fledglings, independent offspring and yearlings produced (Komdeur & Pels, 2005). Insect abundance was estimated by counting the number of insects on the undersides of 50 leaves of the most abundant plant species (Eikenaar, Richardson, Komdeur, & Brouwer, 2010; Komdeur, 1991), at 15 (until 1999) or 14 (after 1999) fixed locations on the island once every month. Monthly insect abundance was calculated as the mean insect abundance across these locations, with insect abundances in each territory extrapolated from the nearest insect count location (Komdeur, 1991). Furthermore, to provide an overall index of territory quality for each territory and investigate long-term effects of environment on investment, we calculated mean standardized territory quality per territory over all seasons (Hammers, Richardson, Burke, & Komdeur, 2012). These estimates were calculated as insect abundance per unit leaf area (dm^2) multiplied by vegetation abundance score, multiplied by territory size. Leaf area was estimated in 1991 by measuring the area of five leaves of each abundant plant species at 50 random sites on the island (Komdeur, 1991). Vegetation abundance was scored each season by determining the presence of all plant species at 20 random points in a territory in the following height bands: 0–0.75 m, 0.75–2 m, 2–4 m, and at 2 m intervals thereafter (Komdeur, 1991). Territory sizes were measured each season using ArcGIS 9; territory boundaries were based on observations of individual warblers and the outcomes of territory disputes. Territory quality estimates were standardized across territories in each breeding season, by mean centering and dividing by two standard deviations (Gelman & Hill, 2007).

2.4 | Statistical methods

We performed generalized linear mixed model analyses in MCMCglmm 2.24 (Hadfield, 2010), which takes a Bayesian approach, in R 3.4.0 (R Core Team, 2017). We first investigated the impact of helper care on the dominants' parental investment by modeling the number of provisioning visits by each dominant individual to offspring. Along with the number of helpers, we included the sex of the

dominant individual, number of offspring, group size, provisioning watch type (provisioning and brooding, provisioning nestling, provisioning fledgling), monthly insect abundance and territory quality index as fixed effects. To explore sex differences in provisioning in response to helper presence or type of provisioning watch (a proxy for chick developmental state), we tested for an interaction between the number of helpers and sex of the dominant individual, and provisioning watch type and sex of the dominant individual. To account for varying observation duration, yet retain variation, the log of the watch duration was also included in the fixed structure (log was applied due to right skew) and a prior was specified to set its regression coefficient to 1 (i.e., observation duration was treated as an offset). To control for repeated measures from dominant individuals that provisioned in more than one breeding season, we included bird identity as a random effect, using an *idh* variance structure (heterogeneous error variance with no covariance) to allow sex-specific variances to be estimated. To control for multiple provisioning watches and simultaneous watches of males and females at the same nest, we included the random effects of provisioning watch identity nested within nest identity. We did not include territory identity as the posterior density plot of territory identity was poor. Multiple provisioning records from the same territory could therefore be a problem in our analyses, so to best control for this without including territory identity, we included individual identity and territory quality, to account for multiple records from the same birds and birds in similar quality territories potentially having similar provisioning rates. To control for differences between observers we included observer identity as a random effect. For the random effects, we applied parameter expanded priors (noncentral scaled *F*-distribution; $V = 1$, $\nu = 0.002$, $\alpha \cdot \mu = 0$, $\alpha \cdot V = 1,000$) to aid chain mixing, as the variance was close to zero and inverse-Wishart distributed priors have high density at values close to zero (Hadfield, 2015). For bird identity and residual variance, the expanded prior was structured as a 2×2 matrix

to estimate variances for dominant males and females separately. The model had a Poisson error distribution and log link, was run for 4.5×10^5 iterations with a burn-in of 5×10^4 and thinning of 400.

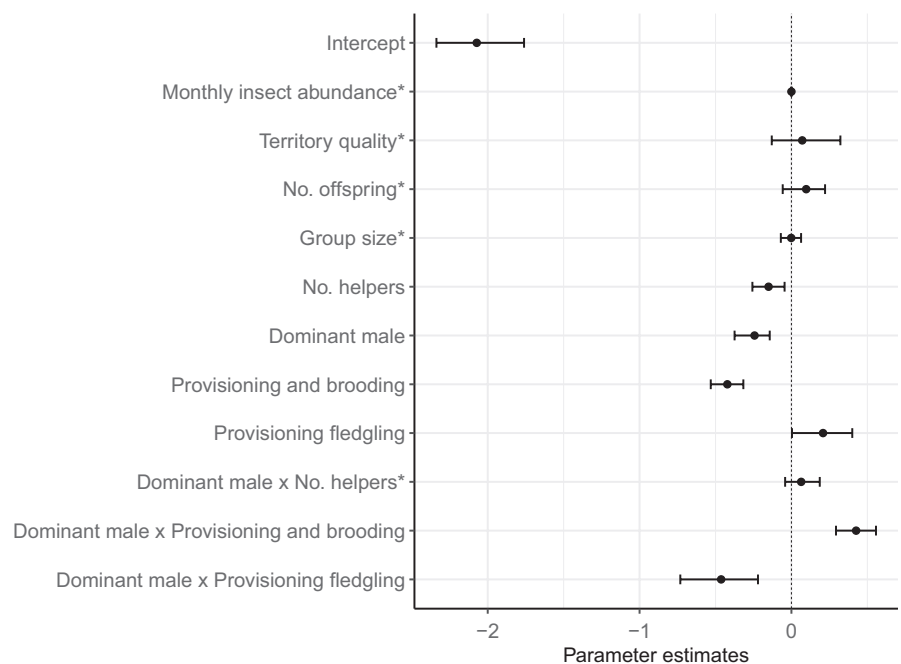
To test whether helper effects were additive or compensatory, we modeled the total number of provisioning visits per watch (i.e., by all dominants and helpers combined). This model was the same as the provisioning model except that the response was the total number of feeds, the parameters describing sex and bird identity were omitted and the model was run for 2.1×10^7 iterations with a 1×10^6 burn-in and 2×10^3 thinning. Provisioning observations of nests with more than one nestling can be confounded by factors such as sibling competition (Bebbington et al., 2017) and reduced statistical power resulting from low sample size of nests with more than one nestling (48/523). We therefore ran additional models with identical settings on single nestling nests thereby excluding the number of offspring as a fixed effect (Supporting Information) to confirm that this did not alter our conclusions.

To assess model convergence, we checked that the: (a) autocorrelation for all parameters was <0.1 ; (b) variance estimates passed the Heidelberger and Welch's convergence diagnostic, which test if successive samples are drawn from a stationary distribution; (c) variance estimates passed the Geweke diagnostic, which tests for equality of the means of the first 10% and last 50% of the Markov chain; and (d) variance inflation between fixed effects was <3 to avoid collinearity (Cowles & Carlin, 1996; Geweke, 1991; Heidelberger & Welch, 1983). We evaluated if the 95% credibility intervals (95% CrI) of the posterior modes overlapped zero, where a departure from zero was interpreted as a significant effect.

3 | RESULTS

Both male and female dominants showed lower provisioning effort when more helpers aided in provisioning (12.9% reduction in

FIGURE 1 Posterior density estimates of parameter modes, and their 95% credible intervals, for the fixed effects used to model the number of feeds by dominant Seychelles warblers with or without helpers: monthly insect abundance, index of territory quality, number of offspring (1 = 808, 2 = 79, 3 = 2), group size (2 = 280, 3 = 425, 4 = 150, 5 = 30, 6 = 4), number of helpers (0 = 492, 1 = 350, 2 = 47), sex of the dominant bird (male = 446, female = 443; contrast = female), watch type (provisioning and brooding = 438, provisioning nestling = 384, provisioning fledgling = 67; contrast = provisioning nestling). *Parameters whose credible intervals do not overlap zero



feeds/hour per helper, from 8.5 (no helpers, $N = 492$) to 8.1 (one helper; $N = 350$) and 7.4 feeds/hour (two helpers; $N = 47$); Figures 1 and 2). This load-lightening effect was similar for males and females as no interaction between the sex of the dominant and the number of helpers was found (Figure 1). An interaction between the sex of the dominant and provisioning watch type revealed that the provisioning rates of dominant males were 27.0% higher to nestlings (8.0 feeds/hr) versus fledglings (5.8 feeds/hr; Figures 1 and 3). The opposite pattern was observed in dominant females, which fed fledglings almost twice as much as nestlings (12.0 vs. 6.8 feeds/hr; Figure 3). Feeding rates were not significantly related to monthly insect abundance, territory quality, number of offspring, or group size (Figure 1).

We found an increase in total provisioning when helpers were feeding and also when more helpers were involved (Figure 4). A single helper resulted in an increase of 30.5% (22.2 visits per hour, $N = 177$, compared to 17.0 feeds in pairs, $N = 248$) provisioning visits per hour, and a second helper increased the total provisioning effect to a 64.7% increase (28.0 feed/hour, $N = 24$; Figure 5). The total number of provisioning visits each hour to nestlings also being brooded was 23.0% less than to nestlings only being provisioned (17.6 vs. 21.6; Figures 4 and 6). The total number of provisioning visits received by offspring was not correlated with group size, number of offspring, territory quality or monthly insect abundance (Figure 4). Excluding nests with more than one offspring from these models did not change the direction or significance of our results (Supporting Information). Together, these results indicate load-lightening and total provisioning increased with additive feeding investment by helpers.

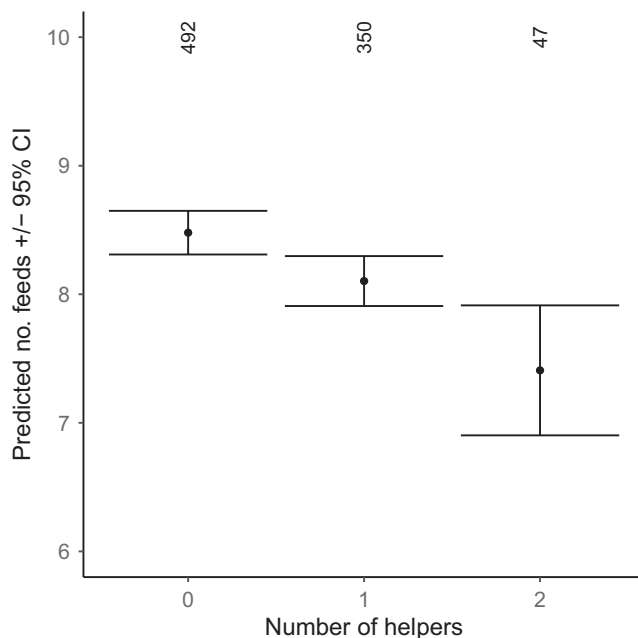


FIGURE 2 The predicted mean number of feeds in provisioning watches by dominant Seychelles warblers in respect to the number of helpers present. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals and numbers at the top of the graph represent number of dominant breeder watches

4 | DISCUSSION

Our analyses of the long-term Seychelles warbler dataset revealed both additive and compensatory helper effects in this species. Helpers lightened the provisioning load of dominant individuals and increased the total number of provisioning trips to the nestlings. These results were not the confounding result of group size or territory quality. Moreover, in addition to subordinates being defined as helpers if they were observed provisioning, subordinates could also be classified as helpers if they were observed aiding with the brooding only (and not provisioning). Therefore, this is a conservative analysis and the actual additive and compensatory effects might be higher. The increased total nest provisioning effort resulting from additive helper provisioning could lead to higher nestling survival (Hatchwell, 1999b; MacColl & Hatchwell, 2003; Valencia, Cruz, Carranza, & Mateos, 2006; Woxvold & Magrath, 2005). Indeed, in the Seychelles warbler, this may well explain the higher survival of offspring in their first year (Komdeur, 1994) and beyond (Brouwer et al., 2012), leading to direct fitness benefits for parents.

We demonstrated that, in addition to additive care, helpers also provide load-lightening benefits for dominant individuals, as dominants of both sexes reduced provisioning rates when aided by helpers. In some, but not all, species (Heinsohn, 2004; Kingma et al., 2010) such load-lightening benefits have been associated with increased survival of dominants with helpers. In the Seychelles warbler, survival of dominants with and without helpers is similar (Komdeur, 1994; Hammers et al.), except among very old dominants when those that receive help show higher survival (Hammers et al.). While it may be that load-lightening effects on breeder survival are only obvious in some circumstances (i.e., when breeders are old), other reproductive components (like re-nesting opportunities or time between nesting attempts) may also be affected by breeders reducing their current workload. Future work will need to reveal whether such effects may explain selection on breeders reducing workload in response to help.

We found that provisioning rates of male dominants were lower than those of female dominants in most provisioning watches. Sex-related differences in the parental investment of the dominants are not uncommon (Hatchwell, 1999b; MacColl & Hatchwell, 2003), and are proposed to result from diverging cost-benefit trade-offs between the sexes (MacColl & Hatchwell, 2003). Several studies have shown that the genetic relatedness of the carer to the brood affects investment, where male uncertainty of parentage can result in lower amounts of care (e.g., Burke, Daviest, Bruford, & Hatchwell, 1989; Neff, 2003; Kokko & Jennions, 2012). In the Seychelles warbler, male breeders are on average less related to the offspring than females, due to the 44% extra-pair paternity occurring in this species (Hadfield, Richardson, & Burke, 2006; Richardson et al., 2001), which may explain the overall lower provisioning by breeder males.

The observation that sex-specific investment changed over the course of the breeding event may suggest that other aspects, besides certainty of parentage, affect the symmetry of provisioning between sexes, as has been observed in other species (Cockburn et

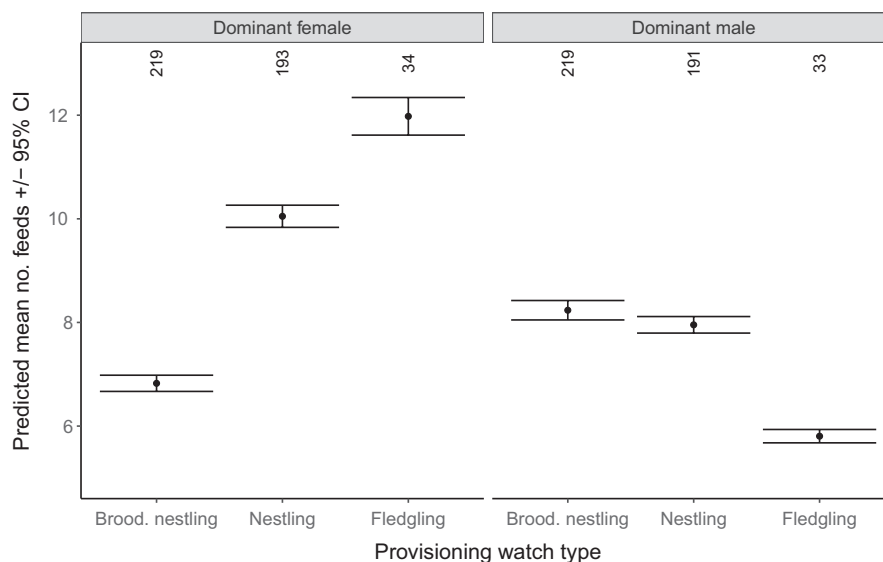


FIGURE 3 The predicted mean number of feeds during provisioning watches by dominant Seychelles warbler males and females in relation to the three types of provisioning watches: provisioning and brooding nestlings (brood. nestling), provisioning nestlings (nestling) and provisioning fledglings (fledgling). Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals and numbers at the top of the graph represent number of dominant breeder watches

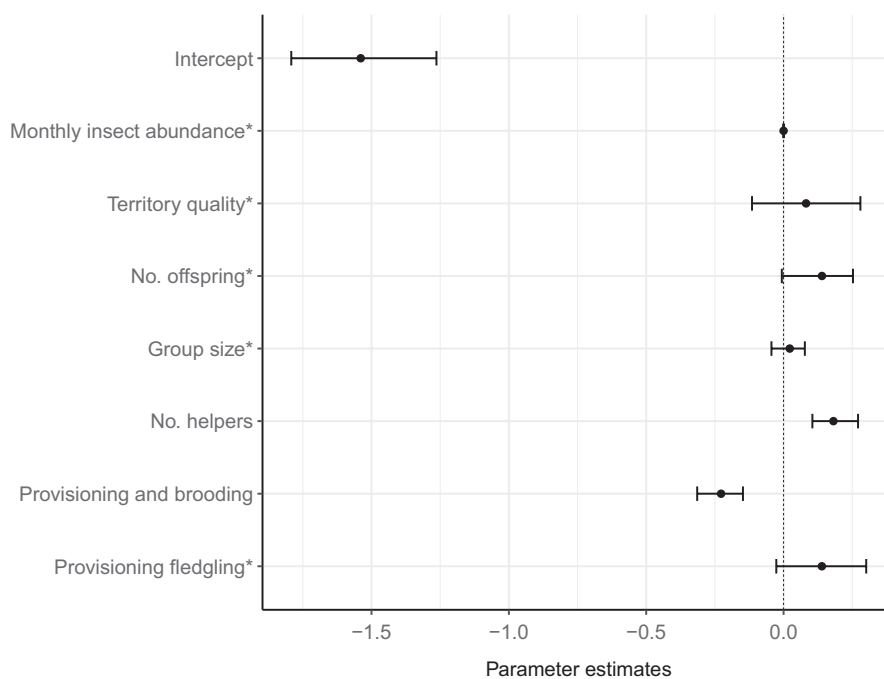


FIGURE 4 Posterior density estimates of parameter modes, and their 95% credible intervals, for the fixed effects used to model the total number of feeds received by the Seychelles warbler offspring from all feeding birds per provisioning watch: monthly insect abundance, index of territory quality, number of offspring (1 = 408, 2 = 40, 3 = 1), group size (2 = 141, 3 = 214, 4 = 77, 5 = 15, 6 = 3), number of helpers (0 = 248, 1 = 177, 2 = 24), watch type (provisioning and brooding = 222, provisioning nestling = 193, provisioning fledgling = 34; contrast = provisioning nestling).

*Parameters whose credible intervals do not overlap zero

al., 2008; Meade et al., 2010). For example, females might reduce the costs of investment before the nestling period by decreasing egg size when assisted by helpers (Russell, Langmore, Gardner, & Kilner, 2008; Dixit et al., 2017; but see Koenig, Walters, & Haydock, 2009). In the Seychelles warbler, females predominantly build the nest and brood the egg, and spend less time foraging compared to males, who guard the nest (Komdeur & Kats, 1999). This, in combination with ongoing brooding of newly hatched chicks, may suggest higher costs, such as time investment, for females during

the prenestling and young-nestling period, which could explain lower provisioning effort of the dominant female compared to the dominant male shortly after hatching. Therefore, the most suitable investment strategy may change within the breeding season and fine-scaled studies are required to understand the evolution of parental care (Savage, Browning, Manica, Russell, & Johnstone, 2017).

Our results differ from previous findings of provisioning effort in the Seychelles warbler in relation to helper presence. Komdeur (1994) found a load-lightening effect for dominant males only when three

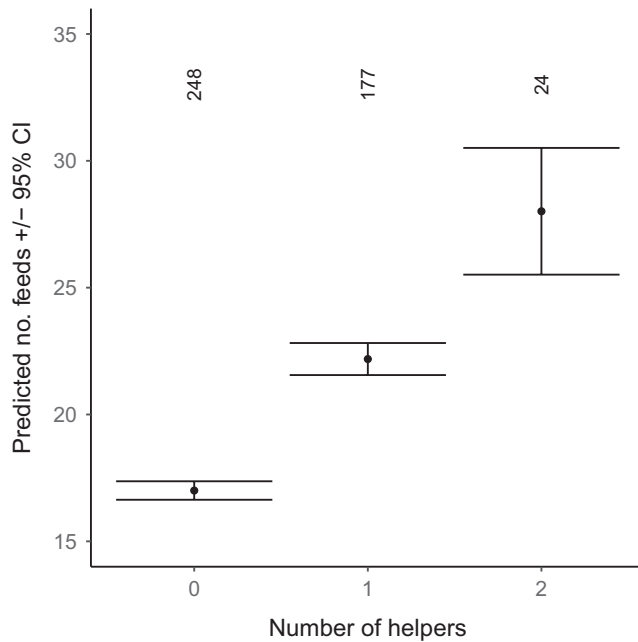


FIGURE 5 The predicted total number of feeds during provisioning watches in relation to the number of helpers present in the territory. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals and numbers at the top of the graph represent number of dominant breeder watches

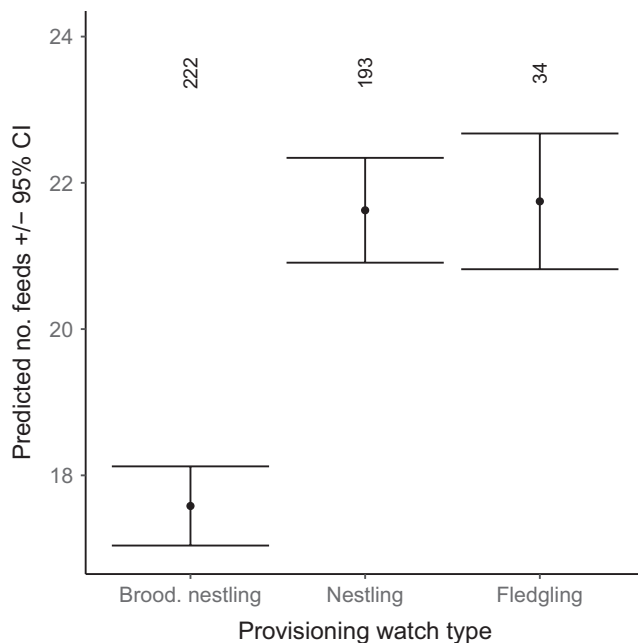


FIGURE 6 The predicted total number of feeds received by the Seychelles warbler offspring from all feeding birds in relation to the three types of provisioning watches: provisioning and brooding nestlings (brood. nestling), provisioning nestlings (nestling) and provisioning fledglings (fledgling). Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals and numbers at the top of the graph represent number of dominant breeder watches

or more helpers were present. The relatively higher degree of load lightening identified here, for both sexes and with a smaller number of helpers, could result from the higher data accuracy used in the current

study, with 97% of the Cousin bird population ringed versus <50% in the previous study. Alternatively, these results could suggest that the cost-benefit trade-offs for dominant individuals may have changed since Komdeur's earlier Seychelles warbler study. For instance, an increase in offspring survival (e.g., due to higher quality of insects or increased protection from the environment; Komdeur & Pels, 2005) would allow parents to relax investment into the current brood.

5 | CONCLUSION

Our study adds to the growing evidence that both compensatory and additive care can apply at the same time within one species. These simultaneous parental care strategies are fundamental to the evolutionary maintenance of cooperative behavior. The exact fitness effects of both load-lightening and additive care, as well as sex-specific changes in fitness benefits during the breeding season need to be explored in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nature Seychelles kindly allowed us to work on Cousin Island and provided accommodation and facilities during our stay. The Department of Environment and the Seychelles Bureau of Standards gave permission for fieldwork and sampling. We would like to thank the numerous researchers, students and field assistants for their invaluable help with data collection. HLD was funded by a Natural Environment Research Council NERC postdoctoral fellowship (NE/I021748/1), LAB received funding from the Groningen University Fund and Marco Polo Fund, and both SAK and MH were funded by Veni fellowships from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). The long-term Seychelles warbler study was funded by a Marie Curie Fellowship (HPMF-CT-2000-01074), NERC fellowship (NER/I/S/2002/00712) and NERC Grants NE/F02083X/1 and NE/K005502/1 to DSR and NWO Grants 854.11.003 and 823.01.014 to JK.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

DATA ACCESSIBILITY

Data is made available on Figshare <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.6977564.v1>. R code is made available on GitHub: https://github.com/Seychelle-Warbler-Project/vanBoheemen_Lotte/.

ORCID

Lotte A. van Boheemen <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9199-7704>

Martijn Hammers <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6638-820X>

Sjouke A. Kingma <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6737-7975>

Hannah L. Dugdale <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8769-0099>

REFERENCES

- Bales, K., French, J. A., & Dietz, J. M. (2002). Explaining variation in maternal care in a cooperatively breeding mammal. *Animal Behaviour*, 63, 453–461. <https://doi.org/10.1006/anbe.2001.1954>
- Bebbington, K., Kingma, S. A., Fairfield, E. A., Spurgin, L. G., Komdeur, J., & Richardson, D. S. (2017). Consequences of sibling rivalry vary across life in a passerine bird. *Behavioral Ecology*, 28, 407–418.
- Bell, M., Cant, M., Borgeaud, C., Thavarajah, N., Samson, J., & Clutton-Brock, T. (2014). Suppressing subordinate reproduction provides benefits to dominants in cooperative societies of meerkats. *Nature Communications*, 5, 4499. <https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms5499>
- Blackmore, C. J., & Heinsohn, R. (2007). Reproductive success and helper effects in the cooperatively breeding grey-crowned babbler. *Journal of Zoology*, 273, 326–332. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7998.2007.00332.x>
- Brouwer, L., Richardson, D. S., & Komdeur, J. (2012). Helpers at the nest improve late-life offspring performance: Evidence from a long-term study and a cross-foster experiment. *PLoS ONE*, 7, e33167. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0033167>
- Brown, J. L., & Brown, E. R. (1981). Kin selection and individual selection in babblers. *Natural Selection and Social Behavior*, 244–256.
- Brown, J. L., Dow, D. D., Brown, E. R., & Brown, S. D. (1978). Effects of helpers on feeding of nestlings in the grey-crowned babbler (*Pomatostomus temporalis*). *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 4, 43–59. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00302560>
- Bruintjes, R., Heg-Bachar, Z., & Heg, D. (2013). Subordinate removal affects parental investment, but not offspring survival in a cooperative cichlid. *Functional Ecology*, 27, 730–738. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2435.12088>
- Burke, T., Daviest, N., Bruford, M. W., & Hatchwell, B. (1989). Parental care and mating behaviour of polyandrous dunnocks *Prunella modularis* related to paternity by DNA fingerprinting. *Nature*, 338, 249. <https://doi.org/10.1038/338249a0>
- Cockburn, A., Sims, R. A., Osmond, H. L., Green, D. J., Double, M. C., & Mulder, R. A. (2008). Can we measure the benefits of help in cooperatively breeding birds: The case of superb fairy-wrens *Malurus cyaneus*? *Journal of Animal Ecology*, 77, 430–438.
- Cowles, M. K., & Carlin, B. P. (1996). Markov chain Monte Carlo convergence diagnostics: A comparative review. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 91, 883–904. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01621459.1996.10476956>
- Dickinson, J. L., & Hatchwell, B. (2004). Fitness consequences of helping. *Ecology and Evolution of Cooperative Breeding in Birds*, 48–66.
- Dickinson, J. L., Koenig, W. D., & Pitelka, F. A. (1996). Fitness consequences of helping behavior in the western bluebird. *Behavioral Ecology*, 7, 168–177. <https://doi.org/10.1093/beheco/7.2.168>
- Dixit, T., English, S., & Lukas, D. (2017). The relationship between egg size and helper number in cooperative breeders: A meta-analysis across species. *PeerJ*, 5, e4028. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.4028>
- Eikenaar, C., Richardson, D., Komdeur, J., & Brouwer, L. (2010). Sex biased natal dispersal is not a fixed trait in a stable population of Seychelles warblers. *Behaviour*, 147, 1577–1590. <https://doi.org/10.1163/000579510X510511>
- Emlen, S. T., & Wrege, P. H. (1991). Breeding biology of white-fronted bee-eaters at Nakuru: The influence of helpers on breeder fitness. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, 60, 309–326. <https://doi.org/10.2307/5462>
- Gelman, A., & Hill, J. (2007). *Data analysis using regression and multilevel/hierarchical models*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Geweke, J. (1991). *Evaluating the accuracy of sampling-based approaches to the calculation of posterior moments*. Minneapolis, MN: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Research Department.
- Griffiths, R., Double, M. C., Orr, K., & Dawson, R. J. (1998). A DNA test to sex most birds. *Molecular Ecology*, 7, 1071–1075. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-294x.1998.00389.x>
- Groenewoud, F., Kingma, S. A., Hammers, M., Dugdale, H. L., Burke, T., Richardson, D. S., & Komdeur, J. (2018). Subordinate females in the cooperatively breeding Seychelles warbler obtain direct benefits by joining unrelated groups. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, 87, 1251–1263.
- Hadfield, J. (2015). MCMCglmm: Course notes. Retrieved from <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/MCMCglmm/vignettes/CourseNotes.pdf>.
- Hadfield, J., Richardson, D., & Burke, T. (2006). Towards unbiased parentage assignment: Combining genetic, behavioural and spatial data in a Bayesian framework. *Molecular Ecology*, 15, 3715–3730. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-294X.2006.03050.x>
- Hadfield, J. D. (2010). MCMC methods for multi-response generalized linear mixed models: The MCMCglmm R package. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 33, 1–22.
- Hammers, M., Kingma, S., Spurgin, L., Bebbington, K., Dugdale, H., Burke, T., ... Richardson, D. *Helpers delay parental senescence: Evidence from a cooperative breeding bird*. In Preparation.
- Hammers, M., Richardson, D. S., Burke, T., & Komdeur, J. (2012). Age-dependent terminal declines in reproductive output in a wild bird. *PLoS ONE*, 7, e40413. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0040413>
- Hatchwell, B. (1999a). Investment strategies of breeders in avian cooperative breeding systems. *The American Naturalist*, 154, 205–219.
- Hatchwell, B., & Russell, A. (1996a). Provisioning rules in cooperatively breeding long-tailed tits *Aegithalos caudatus*: An experimental study. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences*, 263, 83–88.
- Hatchwell, B. J. (2004). Helpers increase long-term but not short-term productivity in cooperatively breeding long-tailed tits. *Behavioral Ecology*, 15, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1093/beheco/arg091>
- Heidelberger, P., & Welch, P. D. (1983). Simulation run length control in the presence of an initial transient. *Operations Research*, 31, 1109–1144. <https://doi.org/10.1287/opre.31.6.1109>
- Heinsohn, R. (1995). Hatching asynchrony and brood reduction in cooperatively breeding white-winged choughs *Corcorax melanorhamphos*. *Emu*, 95, 252–258.
- Heinsohn, R. G. (1992). Cooperative enhancement of reproductive success in white-winged choughs. *Evolutionary Ecology*, 6, 97–114.
- Heinsohn, R. G. (2004). Parental care, load-lightening and costs. In W. D. Koenig & J. L. Dickinson (Eds.), *Ecology and evolution of cooperative breeding in birds* (pp. 67–80). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hodge, S. J. (2005). Helpers benefit offspring in both the short and long-term in the cooperatively breeding banded mongoose. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences*, 272, 2479–2484.
- Johnstone, R. A. (2011). Load lightening and negotiation over offspring care in cooperative breeders. *Behavioral Ecology*, 22, 436–444. <https://doi.org/10.1093/beheco/arq190>
- Khan, M., & Walters, J. (2002). Effects of helpers on breeder survival in the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*). *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 51, 336–344. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00265-001-0441-3>
- Kingma, S. A., Bebbington, K., Hammers, M., Richardson, D. S., & Komdeur, J. (2016). Delayed dispersal and the costs and benefits of different routes to independent breeding in a cooperatively breeding bird. *Evolution*, 70, 2595–2610. <https://doi.org/10.1111/evo.13071>
- Kingma, S. A., Hall, M. L., Arriero, E., & Peters, A. (2010). Multiple benefits of cooperative breeding in purple-crowned fairy-wrens: A consequence of fidelity? *Journal of Animal Ecology*, 79, 757–768.
- Kingma, S. A., Santema, P., Taborsky, M., & Komdeur, J. (2014). Group augmentation and the evolution of cooperation. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, 29, 476–484. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tree.2014.05.013>
- Koenig, W. D., & Dickinson, J. L. (2016). *Cooperative breeding in vertebrates: Studies of ecology, evolution, and behavior*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Koenig, W. D., & Walters, E. L. (2011). Brooding, provisioning, and compensatory care in the cooperatively breeding acorn woodpecker.

- Behavioral Ecology*, 23, 181–190. <https://doi.org/10.1093/beheco/arr172>
- Koenig, W. D., Walters, E. L., & Haydock, J. (2009). Helpers and egg investment in the cooperatively breeding acorn woodpecker: Testing the concealed helper effects hypothesis. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 63, 1659–1665. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00265-009-0773-y>
- Kokko, H., & Jennions, M. D. (2012). Sex differences in parental care. The Evolution of Parental Care. In N. J. Royle., P. T. Smiseth & M. Köllike (Eds.), *Evolution of parental care* (p. 101–116), Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Komdeur, J. (1991). Cooperative breeding in the Seychelles warbler, Doctor of Philosophy. Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge.
- Komdeur, J. (1994). Experimental evidence for helping and hindering by previous offspring in the cooperative-breeding Seychelles warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis*. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 34, 175–186. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00167742>
- Komdeur, J. (1996). Seasonal timing of reproduction in a tropical bird, the Seychelles warbler: A field experiment using translocation. *Journal of Biological Rhythms*, 11, 333–346. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074873049601100407>
- Komdeur, J. (2006). Variation in individual investment strategies among social animals. *Ethology*, 112, 729–747. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1439-0310.2006.01243.x>
- Komdeur, J., Burke, T., Dugdale, H. L., & Richardson, D. S. (2016). Seychelles warblers: Complexities of the helping paradox. In W. D. Koenig & J. L. Dickinson (Eds.), *Cooperative breeding in vertebrates. Studies of ecology, evolution and behavior* (pp. 197–216). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Komdeur, J., & Kats, R. K. (1999). Predation risk affects trade-off between nest guarding and foraging in Seychelles warblers. *Behavioral Ecology*, 10, 648–658. <https://doi.org/10.1093/beheco/10.6.648>
- Komdeur, J., & Pels, M. D. (2005). Rescue of the Seychelles warbler on Cousin Island, Seychelles: The role of habitat restoration. *Biological Conservation*, 124, 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2004.12.009>
- Komdeur, J., Richardson, D. S., Hammers, M., Eikenaar, C., Brouwer, L., & Kingma, S. A. (2017). The evolution of cooperative breeding in vertebrates. *Els*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470015902.a0021218.pub2>
- Lessells, C., & McNamara, J. M. (2012). Sexual conflict over parental investment in repeated bouts: Negotiation reduces overall care. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences*, 279, 1506–1514.
- Liebl, A., Nomano, F., Browning, L., & Russell, A. (2016). Experimental evidence for fully additive care among male carers in the cooperatively breeding chestnut-crowned babbler. *Animal Behaviour*, 115, 47–53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2016.02.024>
- MacColl, A. D. C., & Hatchwell, B. J. (2003). Sharing of caring: Nestling provisioning behaviour of long-tailed tit, *Aegithalos caudatus*, parents and helpers. *Animal Behaviour*, 66, 955–964. <https://doi.org/10.1006/anbe.2003.2268>
- MacGregor, N. A., & Cockburn, A. (2002). Sex differences in parental response to begging nestlings in superb fairy-wrens. *Animal Behaviour*, 63, 923–932. <https://doi.org/10.1006/anbe.2001.1991>
- McDonald, P. G., Kazem, A. J., & Wright, J. (2009). Cooperative provisioning dynamics: Fathers and unrelated helpers show similar responses to manipulations of begging. *Animal Behaviour*, 77, 369–376. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2008.10.009>
- Meade, J., Nam, K. B., Beckerman, A. P., & Hatchwell, B. J. (2010). Consequences of 'load-lightening' for future indirect fitness gains by helpers in a cooperatively breeding bird. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, 79, 529–537. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2656.2009.01656.x>
- Neff, B. D. (2003). Decisions about parental care in response to perceived paternity. *Nature*, 422, 716. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature01528>
- R Core Team (2017). *R: A language and environment for statistical computing* (v3.4.3 "Kite-Eating Tree"). Vienna, Austria: The R Foundation for Statistical Computing.
- Richardson, D. S., Burke, T., & Komdeur, J. (2002). Direct benefits and the evolution of female-biased cooperative breeding in Seychelles warblers. *Evolution*, 56, 2313–2321. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0014-3820.2002.tb00154.x>
- Richardson, D. S., Burke, T., & Komdeur, J. (2007). Grandparent helpers: The adaptive significance of older, postdominant helpers in the Seychelles warbler. *Evolution*, 61, 2790–2800. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1558-5646.2007.00222.x>
- Richardson, D. S., Jury, F. L., Blaakmeer, K., Komdeur, J., & Burke, T. (2001). Parentage assignment and extra-group paternity in a cooperative breeder: The Seychelles warbler (*Acrocephalus sechellensis*). *Molecular Ecology*, 10, 2263–2273. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.0962-1083.2001.01355.x>
- Russell, A., Brotherton, P., McIlrath, G., Sharpe, L., & Clutton-Brock, T. (2003). Breeding success in cooperative meerkats: Effects of helper number and maternal state. *Behavioral Ecology*, 14, 486–492. <https://doi.org/10.1093/beheco/arg022>
- Russell, A., Langmore, N., Gardner, J., & Kilner, R. (2008) Maternal investment tactics in superb fairy-wrens. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences*, 275, 29–36.
- Russell, A., Young, A., Spong, G., Jordan, N., & Clutton-Brock, T. (2007). Helpers increase the reproductive potential of offspring in cooperative meerkats. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences*, 274, 513–520.
- Russell, A. F., Langmore, N. E., Gardner, J. L., & Kilner, R. M. (2008). Maternal investment tactics in superb fairy-wrens. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences*, 275, 29–36.
- Savage, J. L., Browning, L. E., Manica, A., Russell, A. F., & Johnstone, R. A. (2017). Turn-taking in cooperative offspring care: By-product of individual provisioning behavior or active response rule? *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 71, 162.
- Savage, J. L., Russell, A. F., & Johnstone, R. A. (2012). Maternal costs in offspring production affect investment rules in joint rearing. *Behavioral Ecology*, 24, 750–758. <https://doi.org/10.1093/beheco/ars203>
- Scantlebury, M., Russell, A., McIlrath, G., Speakman, J., & Clutton-Brock, T. (2002). The energetics of lactation in cooperatively breeding meerkats *Suricata suricatta*. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences*, 269, 2147–2153.
- Sharp, S. P., English, S., & Clutton-Brock, T. H. (2013). Maternal investment during pregnancy in wild meerkats. *Evolutionary Ecology*, 27, 1033–1044. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10682-012-9615-x>
- Solomon, N. G., & French, J. A. (1997). *Cooperative breeding in mammals*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Stacey, P. B., & Koenig, W. D. (1990). *Cooperative breeding in birds: Long term studies of ecology and behaviour*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Stearns, S. C. (1989). Trade-offs in life-history evolution. *Functional Ecology*, 3, 259–268. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2389364>
- Stearns, S. C. (1992). *The evolution of life histories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tanaka, H., Frommen, J. G., Engqvist, L., & Kohda, M. (2017). Task-dependent workload adjustment of female breeders in a cooperatively breeding fish. *Behavioral Ecology*, 29, 221–229. <https://doi.org/10.1093/beheco/arx149>
- Tanaka, H., Kohda, M., & Frommen, J. G. (2018). Helpers increase the reproductive success of breeders in the cooperatively breeding cichlid *Neolamprologus obscurus*. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 72, 152. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00265-018-2566-7>
- Valencia, J., De La Cruz, C., Carranza, J., & Mateos, C. (2006). Parents increase their parental effort when aided by helpers in a cooperatively breeding bird. *Animal Behaviour*, 71, 1021–1028. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2005.06.021>

- Williams, G. C. (1966). Natural selection, the costs of reproduction, and a refinement of Lack's principle. *The American Naturalist*, 100, 687–690. <https://doi.org/10.1086/282461>
- Woxvold, I. A., & Magrath, M. J. L. (2005). Helping enhances multiple components of reproductive success in the cooperatively breeding apostlebird. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, 74, 1039–1050. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2656.2005.01001.x>
- Wright, J., & Dingemanse, N. J. (1999). Parents and helpers compensate for experimental changes in the provisioning effort of others in the Arabian babbler. *Animal Behaviour*, 58, 345–350. <https://doi.org/10.1006/anbe.1999.1152>
- Zöttl, M., Fischer, S., & Taborsky, M. (2013). Partial brood care compensation by female breeders in response to experimental manipulation of alloparental care. *Animal Behaviour*, 85, 1471–1478. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2013.03.045>

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

How to cite this article: van Boheemen LA, Hammers M, Kingma SA, et al. Compensatory and additive helper effects in the cooperatively breeding Seychelles warbler (*Acrocephalus sechellensis*). *Ecol Evol*. 2019;9:2986–2995. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.4982>